

Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, November 2, 2012

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FERPA & PPRA Letter – October 2012

Action Item Calendar

November 9: Storm damage reports due (see below)
Extended: Nov. 9: Pres. Scholar names due (see below)
December 7: [Nonpublic-textbook reimbursement](#) form due

Notes from Acting Commissioner Abbott

1. RIDE requests reports from LEAs on storm damages and costs – *Action Item*

We are very fortunate that Rhode Island has survived Hurricane Sandy with no storm-related loss of life and with no serious storm-related injuries. We achieved this success through good communication to the public, effective partnerships among multiple agencies, and great cooperation and understanding on the part of all Rhode Islanders. It has been a challenging week, however, for a

number of school districts, as each of you has dealt with decisions about cancellations in the wake of storm damage, power outages, and hazardous driving conditions. I commend you for putting the safety of students and staff paramount, as I know that all of us have been eager to open school as soon as conditions permit and get on with our work of teaching and learning.

In response to a request from the U.S. Department of Education, we have begun to gather information about the effect of the storm on our schools. In order to provide accurate and timely information to the Department, can you please let us know:

- The number of cancelled school days (whole district or, if appropriate, by individual school)
- Description and estimate of any damage or loss to school property
- Description and estimate of costs incurred providing services during the storm (operating as a shelter or evacuation center, providing transportation, etc.)
- Description and estimate of costs incurred related to the storm recovery, such as clean-up or security

We understand that these are preliminary, rough estimates that the Department will use for information only and that they do not constitute an official claim for loss or damages on your part.

Please send this information by the close of business on Friday, November 9, to:

Elliot.krieger@ride.ri.gov

2. RIDE holds conference calls with LEAs on Hurricane Sandy recovery

On Wednesday morning, Lt. Gov. Elizabeth Roberts asked us to schedule a conference call with superintendents and heads of charter and state-run schools, and I appreciate that many of you were able to participate in the call on short notice. We held a second conference call with the Governor and Lieutenant Governor yesterday at noon as well.

On these calls, Governor Chafee thanked you for your patience as the state recovers and as National Grid restores power to all communities. Lt. Gov. Roberts noted that the new approach adopted this year, in which during emergencies you are working directly with your local Emergency Management Director, has worked better than our previous approach (in which you were in regular contact with the R.I. Emergency Management Agency/EMA). Nevertheless, Lt. Gov. Roberts noted that we should maintain the link between superintendents and the EMA.

I appreciate that you have brought your concerns to the table, and I also appreciate that Lt. Gov. Roberts has taken the time to hear your concerns and develop a thoughtful and positive response, which will help us during the current recovery and with preparations and planning going forward.

For our part, we at RIDE will take steps to ensure that you have the contact information you need to reach both your local Emergency Management Director and your National Grid Community Liaison. We will also take the lead in arranging conference calls, as needed, with the Emergency Management Agency so that you can have up-to-date information about the statewide effects of any emergency

situation that could affect your local decision on cancelling school.

Theresa C. Murray, the EMA executive director, participated in the conference call on Wednesday, and she said she welcomes your comments. You can reach her at either 462-7336 or Theresa.C.Murray@us.army.mil

3. RIDE extends deadline to nominate U.S. Presidential Scholars candidates– *Action Item*

In light of this week's storm and its aftermath, RIDE has extended the deadline for schools to submit nominations for [U.S. Presidential Scholars](#) candidates.

The Presidential Scholars Program honors outstanding high-school seniors who are selected on the basis of either outstanding scholarship (based on SAT or ACT scores) or accomplishment in the arts or creative writing. In order to expand the nominee pool, the Commission on Presidential Scholars has asked us to nominate additional candidates "who, while demonstrating outstanding scholarship, might not otherwise be nominated through the current SAT/ACT or arts-recognition processes."

The Commission narrows down the field of roughly 3,000 candidates from around the country to approximately 560 semifinalists. From this group, up to 141 U.S. Presidential Scholars are selected and honored for their accomplishments during National Recognition Weekend, held in June in Washington, D.C. All U.S. Presidential Scholars enjoy an expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., during National Recognition Weekend, where they will meet with government officials, educators, authors, musicians,

scientists, and other accomplished people. During the weekend, scholars have the opportunity to visit museums and monuments and to attend recitals, receptions, and ceremonies. To commemorate their achievement, the Scholars are awarded the U.S. Presidential Scholars medallion at a ceremony sponsored by the White House. Additionally, all Scholars are asked to identify those educators who have most influenced them. The selected educators and the Scholar families are also invited to attend National Recognition Weekend. (For more information on the program, see <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/psp/about.html>.)

To help RIDE select additional Rhode Island nominees, we have asked *each high school* to nominate one male and one female high-school senior (who are citizens or legal permanent residents of the U.S., graduating between January and June of 2013). In selecting U.S. Presidential Scholars from among the nominees, the Commission will consider:

- involvement and service, in school, and in community;
- leadership and character;
- writing samples;
- academic achievements; and
- extraordinary achievement, heavy work load, family responsibilities, or obstacles overcome.

Each student you nominate should prepare an application that includes:

- his or her resume, including home mailing address;
- a letter of reference from you or a school official that explains how the student stands out as having outstanding scholarship;

- a brief (approximately 500 to 750 words) essay that responds to this question: “What special challenges or hurdles have you overcome while still achieving high academic success?”

Either you or an official at your high-school(s) will be our contact in this process. I would ask either you or your principals or high school officials (not the nominated students) to submit your nominations to Kimberly.bright@ride.ri.gov, by the close of business on **November 9**. From nominations we receive, RIDE will select six nominees from Rhode Island (three male students, three female students).

4. RISSA representatives attending Regents meetings

I have observed over the past several weeks that representatives from your professional organization, the Rhode Island School Superintendents Association (RISSA), have regularly attended meetings of the Board of Regents. The presence of superintendents at Regents meetings is a welcome development. The Regents discuss and vote on policy matters and regulations that directly affect the work going on every day in your districts and in the education field at large. It is important that you have a representative at the meetings to provide you with first-hand, timely information about issues before the Regents. Following Board meetings, we would be glad to provide the Regents with input and feedback from you and from the RISSA leadership, which can help the Regents formulate wise decisions that will improve public education in Rhode Island.

From RIDE

Instruction:

5. Virtual Learning Math Modules available to help students meet mathematics graduation requirements

Students in the Class of 2014 have just completed the grade-11 NECAP assessments. Many of these students may fall short of the proficiency level required for graduation. It is critical to provide these students with a progress plan and focused mathematics instruction *now* so as to ensure that the students will meet the level of proficiency in mathematics that will enable them to graduate. The Virtual Learning Math Modules and the available online tutoring are strategies that LEAs may use to provide this type of focused instruction to students at no cost.

Most school teams have been trained at this point, so TechComm Partners will contact LEAs to schedule a site visit that will enable you to provide students access to the modules. Access to the modules will be available following the TechComm site visit. Details about the modules and contact information are available at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/OMP/VL/TechOps/VLMM/vlmm.aspx>.

Training and Webinars:

6. RIDE to hold training on Instructional Management System; will reschedule canceled October 30 training

Our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum will host a training session on the Instructional Management

System (IMS) for System Administrators in LEAs that are implementing the IMS now or in the near future. As a reminder, the IMS training will include admin training on *both* Pinnacle Instruction and EXCEED RTI. The session on **Monday** (November 5), from 8:30 – 11:30 a.m., will be held at URI Providence, as previously scheduled.

Please register for this session through eRIDE. Participants will not need a laptop or tablet.

Due to Hurricane Sandy cancellations, we will reschedule the October 30 training session for late November.

Educator Evaluations and Certification:

7. New Pre-Kindergarten Student Learning Objective Samples posted on RIDE website

We have added new Student Learning Objective (SLO) samples for Pre-Kindergarten teachers to the RIDE website. Based on feedback from the field, we have also reorganized the SLO page on the RIDE website to include a section that highlights SLOs by trait (e.g., tiered targets, collaborative scoring, semester-long).

Educators can access all of the SLO samples on the RIDE website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/SLO.aspx>.

8. Educators can pick up I-Plan documents through December 31

Our Office of Educator Quality and Certification would like to notify all educators that, beginning January 1, RIDE will remove and shred all I-Plan certification-renewal documents that were submitted through the I-Plan renewal process and are currently contained in educator's certification files. These documents include professional development verification forms and artifacts. Since the documents have already been reviewed to make certification-renewal decisions, they are no longer needed by RIDE staff. If you would like to have these materials, please pick them up in the office by **December 31**. Note: you must provide proof of identification. The office is open Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.

9. RIDE seeking public comment on proposed changes to certification tests

RIDE is seeking public comment on proposed changes to the currently approved certification tests required to attain initial licensure in Rhode Island. The proposed changes include adopting two certification tests (Latin and Theatre) that had their scores converted from a 200-800 score scale to a 100-200 score scale. The content of the tests was not changed. Two additional certification tests, School Counselor and School Superintendent, were revised to remain current with the field and national standards. The content of the test and scores have been revised. Information regarding the public-comment process and the proposed changes may be found on our website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/Certification/default.aspx>

From the U.S. Department of Education

10. Districts notified about laws on family, pupil rights

In order to notify all LEAs of their responsibilities under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA), the Family Policy Compliance Office has prepared the attached letter (FERPA & PRPA Letter – October 2012) for all superintendents as well as model forms for notification and consent. The Office will also post this information on its website (<http://www.ed.gov/fpc/>) in a few days.

The Office hope you will find this information helpful as you strive to protect parent and student privacy rights under FERPA and PPRA. Should you or your staff have any questions about the requirements of these two laws after reading the attached and posted information, please do not hesitate to contact the Office, at (202) 260-3887 or FERPA@ed.gov.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>